

Commission News

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Houston inducted into Hall of Fame

By Kathy Dougan, MSWCC

GATLINBURG, TN — On August 12, 2019, at the Park Vista Hotel in Gatlinburg, Russell Gray Houston of Holly Springs, MS, was inducted into the National Association of Conservation Districts Southeast Regional Hall of Fame.

Conservation district officials, employees and partners from 10 Southeast states and territories gathered in Gatlinburg for the annual event, held Aug. 11-13, 2019.

A farmer in Red Banks, MS, for 73 years, Houston, an only child, ran the family farm from age 15 after his father passed.

He has served as a Marshall County Commissioner for 52 years, and as Chairman of the board of commissioners

for the past 35 years.

Over the years, Houston has farmed 2,000 acres of cotton, corn and soybeans, practicing conservation measures such as grade stabilization structures, ponds, contour and no-till farming. He currently has a cow, calf and bull operation on 180 acres.

As a commissioner, Houston supports youth educational programs, and has worked with the MSU Extension Office to implement a partnership to form the Lady Landowners seminar.

He has helped obtain funding for the purchase of a no-till grain drill for landowners in Marshall County, increasing the districts' membership by 10 percent.

Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts, TACD, hosted the event.



Russell Gray Houston, at left, is inducted into the 2019 NACD Southeast Region Hall of Fame by NACD Southeast Region Chair Franklin Williams. Houston has been a Commissioner in Marshall County since 1967.

MSWCC staffers attend NASCA, NWC Conference

By Kathy Dougan, MSWCC

LEXINGTON, KY — State conservation agency leaders and federal, state and local partner leaders met Sept. 30 to Oct. 3, 2019, for the National Association of State Conservation Agencies (NASCA) and National Watershed Coalition (NWC) Conservation Conference.

MSWCC Executive Director Mark Gilbert, President of NASCA, served as the moderator for the meeting.

The conference provided national leaders ongoing dialogue and updates on important aspects of conservation planning, including planning for the upcoming *Conservation Innovation Fair* at NACD's 2020 Annual Meeting.

During the meeting, MSWCC Deputy Administrator Brad Shedd was named Chairman of the National Watershed Coalition, and MSWCC Bureau Director Nick Ivy was nominated to represent the Southeast on NASCA's policy Advisory board.

Lauren Wilson, MSWCC Natural Resources Specialist, made a presentation on Mississippi's car tag conservation program, which began in 2000 as a way



Pictured from left to right: NCDEA President Rhonda Kelsch, NRCS Regional Conservationist Astor Boozer, NARC&DC President William Hodge, NACD President Tim Palmer, NACD First Vice President Michael Crowder, NASCA President Mark Gilbert.

to fund MSWCC Conservation Education in Mississippi.

A renewal of a Conservation Education tag costs an additional \$33, with \$25 of the funds per tag collected by the state going to the Conservation Education Fund. To purchase a new Conservation Education tag via U.S. Mail, the cost is an additional \$37.

Bolivar County Conservation Carnival draws 100 students

CLARKSDALE, MS — The Bolivar County Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored its annual Conservation Field Day on Friday, Sept. 27, 2019, at Bear Pen Park.

Fifth graders from three schools in Bolivar County participated in the event, at which students were able to learn about conservation and preservation of our natural resources.



Upper Little Bayou Pierre

MSWCC Environmental Administrator Lee Smith digs a hole to erect a WATER QUALITY PROJECT sign for the Upper Little Bayou Pierre on Oct. 3, 2019, in Copiah and Claiborne counties.

Exhibits included ATV safety, water pollution, soils, forestry, and wildlife. MSWCC Natural Resources Specialist Robin Tisdale served as a Team Leader for the event. Instructors included: Tracy Roberston from MSU Extension Service, who spoke to Pearman Elementary 5th graders

about the importance of ATV safety;

Linda Hiter from Merigold, who raises butterflies as a hobby, talked to 5th graders from PDS about the life cycle of the Monarch butterfly while their teacher, Heather Sledge, exhibited a container of caterpillars for students to inspect;

Paul Rodrigue, NRCS Engineer from Grenada, MS, spoke about water quality and pollution with Pearman Elementary 5th graders;

Jackie Kerr from the Museum of Natural Science and History in Jackson, MS, talked to students at Bayou Academy 5th graders about alligators native to our area, and; Alec Conrad from NRCS of Greenwood, MS, shared forestry information with Bayou Academy 5th grade students.



Tina McDonald, a 5th grade teacher from Pearman Elementary, releases a newly emerged monarch butterfly during the event.



Tracy Roberston, from MSU Extension Service, talks to Pearman Elementary 5th graders about the importance of ATV safety.

PHOTOS BY BOBBI WILEY, Bolivar Co. District Clerk

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MSWCC's Tisdale, Goode, demonstrate 'Trash Bash' at Energy Awareness Day

By Kathy Dougan, MSWCC

JACKSON, MS—Buses filled with energetic students descended on the grounds of the Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum on the morning of Oct. 3, 2019, for a day of learning outside of the classroom at MDA's annual Energy Awareness Day.

Students in grades 2 through 12, 1,024 of them, plus 108 teachers/chaperones and 170 volunteers/vendors traveled from all over the state to Jackson where exhibits about fossil fuels, nuclear power and renewable energy were on display. Presentations included solar and wind power, biomass, recycling, composting and other learning-based activities and games as part of the day's events.

In celebration of October designated as Energy Awareness Month, the Mississippi Development Authority's Energy & Natural Resources Division hosts this annual event, which is made possible in part by major sponsors including: U.S. Department of Energy, Chevron, USA, Entergy Mississippi, Irby Construction and Nissan USA.

Twenty different learning stations, including MSWCC's "Trash Bash" learning game, participated in the event.



MSWCC Natural Resources Specialist Carlee Goode, kneeling, checks to make sure recyclables have been sorted properly after a round of "Trash Bash." Photo by Robin Tisdale, MSWCC Natural Resources Specialist.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MACD ANNUAL MEETING: Jan. 22-23, 2020, Jackson-Hilton, Jackson, MS. For information visit www.macdweb.org

NACD 74th ANNUAL MEETING: Feb. 8-12, 2020, Las Vegas. For more information, please visit *NACD's Annual Meeting* webpage.

DRAWDOWN TICKETS AVAILABLE

It's that time of the year to show your support for Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts Endowment Fund Scholarships.

The 2020 Drawdown is for \$5,000, and only 500 tickets will be sold, which means there is a 1-in-500 opportunity to win.

The Drawdown begins at 6:30 PM Wed., Jan. 22, 2020, at the 2020 MACD Annual Meeting at the Hilton-Jackson. Drawdown tickets are \$50 each. You do not need to be present to win. Tickets can be purchased from your conservation district county office or from MACD Secretary/Treasurer Hope Daley.

For more information, email Hope Daley at hrgd1984@yahoo.com or call 601-325-8599.

Good turnout at Pike County Field Day

By Nancy Lazenby
Pike Co. District Clerk

SUMMIT, MS — Sixty people attended the Pike County Soil and Water Conservation District and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service 2019 Agriculture Field Day, on Thursday, Sept. 26, 2019, at the farm of hay producer Bobby McKennis, Pike County SWCD treasurer.

Porche Jackson, Soil Conservationist and Acting Pike County District Conservationist, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and Lewis Goings of the MS Association of Conservation Districts conducted the prayer.

Participants heard from professionals on topics ranging from USDA-NRCS programs available to landowners and farmers which included:

- Financial assistance for producers through the USDA-Farm Service Agency;
- Importance of the annual census of US agriculture conducted by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, and;
- Services offered by the Pike County Office of Alcorn State University Extension Program.

Jackson explained the Five Steps To



Participants networking at the Pike County Field Day.

Assistance, which included the Ranking Process of NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP, and discussed the differences between EQIP and the Conservation Stewardship Program, or CSP.

McKennis offered a summary and suggestions about his hay operation.

Dennis Jones, USDA-NRCS Area Conservationist, gave updates on the new Farm Bill passed by Congress, and encouraged farmers and landowners to contact NRCS and other USDA agencies for technical and financial assistance.

Attendees included members of the Winston County Self Help Cooperative.

The event was sponsored by Pike County, USDA, Alcorn State University, MSU, FSA, and Mississippi Ag.